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11 September 1992

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LETTER DATED 11 SEPTEMBER 1992 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

In reference to the letters to the Security Council from my President, dated 3 July 1992 and 14 July 1992, and my letters dated 13 July 1992 and 28 July 1992, regarding the urgent need to initiate relief flights to the airport in Tuzla;

I have the honour to present to you an attached abridged report, "The New Enemy: Serbs at bay, Bosnian town fights hunger", by an independent source, Mr. Roy Gutman, published in the New York Newsday on 20 August 1992, regarding the gravity of the humanitarian situation in Tuzla, and regarding the capacity of the Tuzla airport to accommodate unhindered the relief flights.

May I ask for your kind assistance in circulating the report as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Muhamed SACIRBEY
Ambassador and
Permanent Representative

Annex

"The New Enemy: Serbs at bay, Bosnian town fights hunger"
by Roy Gutman - European correspondent

Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina - The woman was 45 and well-dressed, but she had gone so long without food when she appeared outside the modest office of the Red Crescent charity earlier this month that she could not even sit up. She asked only for a glass of water with sugar.

The staff noted signs of shock and called an ambulance, but the doctor was unable to assist her because the hospital had run out of intravenous fluid. "I gave her my own breakfast, a slice of bread and a tomato," said Nejira Nalic, a Red Crescent employee. "Then we let her go. We could do nothing for her."

The woman, whose fate is unknown, is just one of thousands of victims of a severe shortage of food and medical supplies in Northeast Bosnia, where 750,000 people now live, including 150,000 mostly Muslim refugees from "ethnically cleansed" towns and villages. And the Red Crescent's inability to help her shows, in a microcosm, how ineffectual international aid has been in reducing the suffering here.

"Every day, people are going hungry. They come asking for a liter of cooking oil or a kilo of flour. People are desperate," said Sead Avdic, president of the local governing council.

But Tuzla, Bosnia's leading industrial center, is not just another city under siege. It is, in fact, the last fully functioning free region of any size in the internationally recognized country of Bosnia. It was here that local leaders, through wit, organization and a modest supply of arms, managed in May to hold off the Serb military juggernaut that captured two-thirds of Bosnia's territory. By conquering Bosnian territory the Serbs hope to expand the territory of Serbia to include ethnic Serbs wherever they live.

Now, with the Serbs at bay, the enemy is hunger. But Tuzla's pleas for international help have fallen on deaf ears. The shelves in the city's supermarkets are bare. There has been no gasoline since April. According to mayor Selim Beslagic, Tuzla normally consumes 7,300 tons of food a month, but is receiving only 400 tons a month by humanitarian convoys it has organized with its own resources and foreign donations.

As of late last week, Tuzla's Gradina Hospital had run out of antibiotics except for penicillin, of intravenous fluid and X-ray film, and was down to a three-day supply of medicine needed for kidney dialysis and only a week's worth of basic vaccines.

"Every day is dramatic. We're used to it," said Hilmija Hadzefendic, who is in charge of the city's health crisis staff. "The most dramatic moment was when we ran out of bandages. On July 26, we issued the last meter of bandage." Then they started using ripped bedsheets, and when the supply ran out, they tried cellulose. That did not work, so they turned to "cellstoff," a material used in hygienic wipes.

Tuzla and the surrounding region, historically a concentration of Bosnia-Herzegovina's mainly Muslim population, are evidence that some of the republic is still alive and functioning despite the Serb onslaught, and that Bosnians can defend themselves. But Tuzla also provides evidence of a pattern of neglect by the international community, which has ignored the Bosnian hinterlands and, driven by the presence of the world news media, focused almost exclusively on Sarajevo.

Although more than half of Bosnia's endangered Muslim population is living here, no international organization has a representative in Tuzla. City officials said this reporter was the first westerner to visit since May.

"All of the world's activity is focused on Sarajevo, as if it were the whole of Bosnia-Herzegovina," said Beslagic. "We accept that Sarajevo is unquestionably Bosnia-Herzegovina. But Bosnia-Herzegovina is also Visegrad, Gorazde, Mostar, Trebinje, and Tuzla, and we cannot accept that our destiny will be solved through only Sarajevo."

Tuzla also illustrates the enormous challenge facing every Bosnian town as fall and winter approach, compounded by its size, the influx of refugees, and its near total isolation.

The city's normal population of 80,000 has been swollen by 55,000 registered refugees. The region's usual population of 600,000 has increased by 155,000 refugees. New refugees arrive at the rate of 500 to 1,000 a day, city officials said, mostly with only the shirts on their backs and a grocery bag of belongings.

The United Nations has sent in only two relief convoys since April, leaving the city to organize resupply on its own. The only route is a primitive dirt road hacked out of the mountainside that will become impassable after the first rains of autumn.

In the last month, Beslagic sent a series of SOS messages to President George Bush, Secretary of State James Baker, UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the International Red Cross and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. "Please, do everything you could do" to open an air bridge to ease the growing crisis, he pleaded in the memo, a copy of which was made available to New York Newsday. He told them Tuzla's airport is bigger than Sarajevo's, is ready for operations, is out of line of the Serb cannon, and can easily be protected with a force of 100 UN troops. But no one replied.

"We get lots of requests," said Ron Redmond, spokesman for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Zagreb, Croatia, noting that his agency is trying to set up a warehouse in Bosnia where towns could obtain supplies and, using their own trucks, deliver the material to their citizens. But such a plan would not help Tuzla, given the political conflict that threatens to block relief convoys and the imminent closing of the road link.

UN officials in New York also appeared to be unaware of the appeal from Tuzla.

UN officials could not recall the references to Tuzla but later found in their files copies of several letters from Bosnian officials about the city's plight.

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LETTER DATED 10 SEPTEMBER 1992 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

You will have seen that in paragraph 11 of my report of today's date on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (S/24540) I have proposed that the Security Council should give the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) authority to provide protection to convoys of persons released from the detention camps in Bosnia and Herzegovina, if the International Committee of the Red Cross should so request and if the Force Commander should judge the request to be practicable.

I have today received from Mr. Cyrus Vance a cable in which he asks that, pending the Security Council's approval of the recommendation in my report, I should seek the Council's authority, on an exceptional basis, for UNPROFOR to use its existing resources to protect some 4,000 or more Muslim and Croat detainees who are expected to be released shortly from Serb detention camps at Manjaca and Trnopolje in the northern part of Bosnia and Herzegovina and to be taken, at their wish, to transit facilities in Croatia. The Croatian authorities have agreed to this arrangement.

Both the camps concerned are within 50 kilometres of UNPROFOR units already deployed in Croatia, which makes it possible for UNPROFOR to provide limited assistance in accompanying land convoys from those camps to Croatia. I would like to underline, however, that such assistance by UNPROFOR to convoys of persons released from more distant camps would have to await the deployment of the additional units recommended in my report.

Mr. Vance has underlined the urgent need, on humanitarian grounds, for the detainees at Manjaca and Trnopolje to be enabled to leave Bosnia and Herzegovina in safety and I propose to instruct the Force Commander to proceed accordingly.

I should be grateful if you would bring this matter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) Boutros BOUTROS-GHALI

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LETTER DATED 12 SEPTEMBER 1992 FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to inform you that the attention of Security Council members has been drawn to your letter dated 10 September 1992 (S/24549) concerning UNPROFOR protection of the detainees who, it is hoped, will shortly be released from the Serbian detention camps at Manjaca and Trnopolje in the northern part of Bosnia and Herzegovina and transferred, in accordance with their wishes and with the agreement of the Croatian authorities, to transit locations in Croatia. The members of the Security Council are in agreement with the proposal contained in your letter.

(Signed) José AYALA LASSO
President of the Security Council

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12 September 1992
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LETTER DATED 10 SEPTEMBER 1992 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRAQ TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a letter dated 10 September 1992 from Mr. Mohammed Said al-Sahaf, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq, concerning intervention to end the practices engaged in by the Sanctions Committee.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nizar HAMDOUN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

Letter dated 10 September 1992 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to draw your attention to our letter dated 7 August 1992, in which we urged you to intervene to end the practices engaged in by the Sanctions Committee, which are designed to inflict the greatest possible harm on the people of Iraq by preventing basic civilian items from reaching them. This is a result of the arbitrary and unwarranted positions imposed on the Committee, usually by three of its members, namely, the United States of America, the United Kingdom and France.

The continued functioning of the Committee in the present manner can only tarnish the reputation of the Organization and undermine its credibility, which is now subject to suspicion and doubt on the part of many countries of the world. This is done out of deference to a small group of countries which are striving, directly and indirectly, to oppress and harm the Iraqi people, a situation which has had clear repercussions on people in all walks of life, as has been stressed in the reports of all the humanitarian organizations and international missions which have visited Iraq.

The silence in the face of the conduct of some States members of the Committee has reached a point where it can only be interpreted as a deliberate stance and a relinquishment of responsibility for the crimes that are being committed against Iraq and the Iraqi people. These iniquitous attitudes are setting a dangerous precedent of inflicting harm on peoples, and these attitudes and procedures are likewise immoral and incompatible with the norms of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

What took place at the 76th meeting of the Sanctions Committee, which was held on 3 September 1992, warrants close consideration; it reflects the injustice, the prejudices and the arbitrariness being directed against Iraq and its people by certain States which, on every pretext and with all manner of excuses, are obstructing the delivery of basic humanitarian items to the Iraqi people. What has been reflected, clearly and unequivocally, is that a majority of the members of the Committee are not in agreement with the policy of these States regarding the adoption of decisions by the Committee. This is because of the manner in which these States present their excuses and pretexts, with implicit contempt for the rights of others, in implementation of preconcerted policies designed to inflict the greatest possible harm on Iraq and its people.

The incidents which most clearly illustrate the use of these methods in the Committee are as follows:

1. The representative of the United Kingdom objected to a proposal for a Pakistani company to supply Iraq with 10,000 extractor fans, on the grounds that these items would strengthen the Iraqi industrial infrastructure, without

explaining how they would do so. The most appropriate comment on this is the one made by the representative of Ecuador, who said that he saw no danger in providing Iraq with such fans.

2. The United Kingdom and United States representatives objected to the proposed supply to Iraq of plate glass and cement, also without citing any plausible arguments; this, in turn, prompted objections from the representatives of Ecuador, Morocco and Zimbabwe, who insisted on the need for States to present valid and convincing reasons for objecting to the export of any item to Iraq. The representative of one State pointed out that the members of the Committee had reached an agreement in this area, and that some of the objections raised had become a source of ridicule and irony.

Iraq endorsed the request by some States members of the Committee that States which had objections should show respect for the other members of the Committee by presenting plausible arguments and explanations, so that the Committee's decisions would no longer be subject to ridicule; that situation cannot be allowed to continue, and we are certain that you must likewise disapprove of the decisions of a United Nations body lending themselves to such treatment.

3. The United Kingdom representative objected to a proposal for a company to supply Iraq with 550 tons of metal bars to be used in the manufacture of medical furnishings and hospital beds, claiming that such items would strengthen Iraq's industrial capacity, and requested information on the end-user of the material; this prompted one of the members of the Committee to ask ironically who, indeed, was the patient who was to sleep in that bed.

Here we must ask: is this the manner in which Iraq's industrial infrastructure is to be developed? Is it a goal of the United Nations to destroy Iraq's civilian infrastructure? And are hospital beds part of this infrastructure? We leave it to the members of the Committee to answer these questions.

4. The representative of the United States further objected to a proposal to export 3,700 children's bicycles to Iraq. The said representative made the ridiculous claim that these bicycles did not constitute a humanitarian need, whereupon the representatives of several other States replied that the bicycles should be regarded as a humanitarian item by any standard, because of the humanitarian, moral and spiritual duty to meet the needs of children whatever those needs might be; they requested the United States representative to transmit their views to his Government. The presiding officer then said that, as Acting Chairman of the Committee, he could not allow the adoption of a decision denying permission to export children's bicycles for the reasons stated by the United States representative.

Is this the treatment deserved by God's creatures on Earth, who have suffered so much from the aerial bombardment by the United States and its allies, which destroyed plants producing milk for them, their schools and their homes?

We urge you once again, most emphatically, to use your good offices and to act firmly to halt the practices taking place in the Sanctions Committee, which are incompatible with all humanitarian values and concepts, and which, having evoked indignation and scorn from the Iraqi people and from all honest people in the world, have begun to elicit irony and ridicule from the Committee members themselves. This bitter, shameful and reprehensible situation which has been forced on the Sanctions Committee reflects negatively on the reputation and credibility of the Organization, of which my country is proud to be a founding Member.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Mohammed Said AL-SAHAF
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Republic of Iraq

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REPORT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL CONCERNING THE CREDENTIALS OF THE DEPUTY REPRESENTATIVE OF FRANCE ON THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Pursuant to rule 15 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the Secretary-General wishes to report that he has received credentials signed on 18 August 1992 by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of France stating that Mr. Hervé Ladsous has been appointed deputy representative of France on the Security Council.

In the opinion of the Secretary-General, these credentials are in order.

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